

E 440

.5

.B31

**LIBRARY OF CONGRESS**



00001745384









A NORTHERN PLEA

FOR THE

RIGHT OF SECESSION.

---

BY GEO. W. BASSETT.

OF OTTAWA, ILL.

---

OTTAWA :

Printed at the Office of the Free Trader

1861.



F448  
5  
231

# A NORTHERN PLEA FOR THE RIGHT OF SECESSION.

BY GEO. W. BASSETT.

THE great event of the day and of the world, is the formal dissolution of the American Union.

But secession, the exciting phenomenon, is only the fatal issue of a chronic disease, as old as the nation. The seeds of dissolution were planted in the American Government at its formation.

Long before the South Carolina ordinance of secession, was this Union of States destroyed in spirit and practice. The laws which obligate the States and their citizens to each other, have been practically nullified for years. While a citizen of Massachusetts, or of any other Northern State, can traverse the whole wide extent of the British Empire, and, whatever his color, creed or condition at home, his natural rights be as firmly protected as those of the Queen on her throne; the moment he crosses the line which divides the slave from the non-slave States, he is subject to indignities and lawless outrage, unsurpassed by the selfish cruelty of the most wild and inhospitable barbarians.

It is a humiliating thought, that there is no power in the civilized world that could protect the *life* of the President elect, though uncharged with civil crime, were he now to attempt to pass through the Slave States of this Republic.

The mere ordinance of a misguided State, therefore, is not the cause of the dissolution of the American Union. A more potent agency has long since wrought the fatal work, beyond the remedy of civil or military power.

But the formal separation of the States, so long increasingly probable, has at length become a matter of history. The spirited State of South Carolina has led the way, and, by the highest act of popular sovereignty,

formally repealed the ordinance of 1788, whereby the Constitution of the United States of America was ratified, and has thus dissolved her Union with the other States of this Confederacy.

One star, followed by another and another and *others* still, have fled from the American galaxy.

Whether there is any legitimate or illegitimate power able to sieze and replace them again, and bind them in their former and formal courses of reluctant submission, is the question of the times.

It is to the candid and deliberate consideration of this question, that I now ask attention.

An exigency has occurred in the history of our country, which requires the guidance of fundamental principles and the promptings of a magnanimous spirit. Without original and profound views of the principles of government, we shall find ourselves bewildered at every point. Nay! we may fancy that we are incidentally advancing the cause of freedom, when, in fact, by obeying the dictates of prejudice and following the precedents of the past, we may be forging chains for ourselves, and strengthening those which have so long bound the Negro slave.

It may be thought strange that, with my well-known hostility to American Slavery, together with the almost unanimous anti-secession feeling of the North, I should, in this specific controversy, take the side of the South.

But it is not in the enslavement of her poor, that I side with her; but in her inalienable right of national sovereignty.

The greater question of the existence of slavery is a distinct matter, and, if involved at all, very differently, in my apprehension, from that of the popular mind generally at the North. Nor have I failed to give due consideration to that greatest of political problems.

#### THE QUESTION STATED.

The specific question is, "*Has any one of the United States a right to secede from the Union at her own option?*"

This should not be confounded with other collateral or incidental questions, such as, whether there is sufficient *cause* for secession? or whether it is expédient for the seceding States? or best for the other States?

I propose to discuss the *absolute and unqualified right of the people of any State to dissolve their political connection with the General Government whenever they choose.*

The right of secession implies, of course, the right of the people to be their own exclusive judges in the matter. By the very act of asking the consent or permission of the other States to secede, they relinquish the right to do so. So by granting them that permission, you would deny them the right. Says Furguson, "Liberty is a right which every individual must be ready to vindicate for himself, and which he who pretends to bestow as a favor, has by that very act in reality denied."



Before entering upon the direct argument for the right of State secession, and as preparatory to it, I will invite attention briefly to the great fundamental principle of all free government, viz: *The political supremacy of the people of any given territory over all other human authority, subject only to natural justice.* A due consideration of the nature and legitimate object of government will make this principle obvious to reason. The true nature of government is the will of the people governed, voluntarily expressed and enforced by themselves. Its object is protection from injustice. The true idea of government is, that of a mutual league of such persons as may voluntarily unite to protect each other against lawless and vicious men. One man is not naturally more a ruler than another. The people of any community as a whole are endowed with natural sovereignty. They alone are interested, and of course they alone are the proper authors of laws, and the creators of magistrates. Hence they are politically superior to all constitutions, compacts, laws or magistrates. Magistrates are only the hired servants of the sovereign people, which they may discharge at will. Laws and constitutions are only the decrees of the people, which the makers are competent to annul or change at will.

This principle is clearly recognized in our own immortal Declaration of Independence in these words: "Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness."—And this declaration was made "in the name and by the authority of the good people of these colonies," and our own glorious Revolution was the practical commentary upon this great principle of popular supremacy.

The same has been abundantly enunciated by the wisest of English statesmen, and exemplified by the most exalted instances of patriotic devotion and valor.

The profoundest of England's political philosophers, and the most revered of her patriots, the great Algernon Sidney, says, "that they who place the power in a multitude, understand a multitude composed of freemen, who *think* it for their convenience to join together, and to establish such laws and rules as they oblige *themselves* to observe; which multitude, whether it be great or small, has the *same right*; because *ten* men are as free as ten millions; and though it may be more prudent in some cases to join with the greater than the smaller number, because there is more strength, it is not so always; but however every man must therein be his own judge, since if he mistake, the hurt is only to himself; and the *ten* may as *justly* resolve to live together, form a civil society, and oblige themselves to laws, as the greatest number of men that ever met together in the world."

This clear, profound, and comprehensive proposition, expresses the

great fundamental principle of civil liberty, and lies at the foundation of all free governments, whatever their form. It was enunciated by one of the world's greatest philosophers and truest heroes, and was endorsed by his life and sealed with his blood upon the scaffold of tyranny, which is indeed the scaffold of glory. But it is constantly being overlooked and lost from the popular mind. The people are ever forgetting their natural sovereignty, with all its advantages and responsibilities, and paying a blind devotion to some form of tyranny which they reverence under the name of government, and most blindly and most devoutly those plausible tyrannies which are exercised in their own name and authority.

But on a point so vital and fundamental, I would refer to another of the intellectual giants of the 17th century. It is John Milton, the magnificence and profoundness of whose political writings are hardly surpassed by the unequalled grandeur of the *Paradise Lost*. He says, "that since the king or magistrate holds his authority of the people, both originally and naturally for *their* good, in the first place, and not *his* own, then may the people as oft as *they* shall judge it for the best, either choose him or reject him, retain him or depose him, though no tyrant, merely by the liberty and right of free born men, to be governed as seems to them best."

These majestic truths have stood the test of ages of hostile power and popular prejudice. They are truly immortal. They may be forgotten in the selfish gratifications of a degenerate, mercenary, and servile age. They may be eclipsed by the dazzling glitter of aristocratic wealth and power, but they are imperishably enshrined with the richest jewels of the world's literature. There will they ever remain, for the encouragement of the patriot, and the guide and inspiration of the heroes of Liberty.

Again, our own great Jefferson, as late as 1819, in arguing against the supremacy and independence of any one department of government, says, "that absolute independence can be trusted nowhere but with the people, *en masse*. They are independent of all but moral law."

Here is an admirable expression of both the *extent* and *limit* of popular supremacy. The people are competent to any political act that is not morally unjust. But they possess no sovereign right to do wrong. They are independent of all but moral law. No antiquity of authority—no extent of numbers—no solemnity of legal forms, nor majesty of judicial decisions, nor sanctity of religious oaths, can authorize the perpetration of a moral wrong—can justify a Shylock in taking the covenanted pound of flesh.

It is claimed that a numerical majority have a right to rule and to enforce their decrees. But nothing is more erroneous. The Southern statesmen are right in principle in denying the absolute supremacy of the majority. Majorities possess no legitimate authority to do wrong. There can be no legitimate authority to do a moral wrong, because right

is immutable, and eternally and unconditionally obligatory. *Right is the unchanging decree of the Supreme Being.*

If a majority enacts and enforces a moral wrong, it is nothing less nor more than tyranny; and no tyrannies are so irresponsible and uncontrollable as those of a majority; and no political thralldom is so degrading as that which is self-imposed.

It is plain, therefore, that sovereignty ceases with the transgression of natural justice. *Then* the sovereign, whether a monarch or a tyrannical majority, becomes *himself* the culprit, and justly subject to any righteous power that may restrain him. "Justice," says Milton, "*is the sword of God, superior to all mortal things, in whose hand soever, by apparent signs, his testified will is to put it.*"

But this popular supremacy, of course, involves *also* popular responsibility. Government is not a mere selfish interest, but a high and sacred trust. The legitimate end of government is to prevent injustice. The sovereign people are therefore the responsible guardians of civil justice and human rights. This responsibility, in any given case, is measured by physical power. Human enactments being the mere creatures or acts of the people, are not, of course, the true measure of their responsibility. The sovereign people have no more right to suffer injustice, than to do it. It is a betrayal or neglect of their trust. They are the divinely constituted and legitimately authorized guardians of human rights over such territory as they may actually occupy; and for the faithful discharge of the functions of political supremacy, God and humanity will hold them responsible.

Of no principle of political philosophy is history more replete with beautiful and glorious examples, than this of popular supremacy. The gloomy annals of human thralldom are relieved and gladdened by innumerable instances of its heroic exercise.

It was the presiding genius of Roman destiny in all the brilliant progress of that wonderful people from an iron monarchy to the achievement of a system of republican freedom, which has been the pride, stimulant, and model of the race ever since. The same principle, also, has ever presided over the development of that palladium of human freedom, the British Constitution. And to-day, in both hemispheres, it is the mighty angel of Liberty, commissioned of God, and moving about among the nations, demolishing thrones, changing dynasties, crushing despotisms, and everywhere demanding the inauguration of the reign of justice and equal right.

Thus it appears that supreme political power inheres in the people of any given territory, that they have the right to do politically whatever is not in its nature unjust. They may form, modify, or abolish their government as shall seem best to their own judgment, restricted of course by "justice," which, as Milton says, "*is the only true sovereign and supreme majesty upon earth.*"

*It is, simply, the great natural right of self-government.*



From this fundamental truth of political philosophy, I infer the right of South Carolina, or any other State of the American Confederacy, to secede from the Union, at their *own option*.

This corollary from the principle of popular supremacy, I propose further to illustrate, sanction, and enforce, by such considerations as are suggested by the present national exigency.

#### THE CONSENT OF THE GOVERNED ESSENTIAL.

Our government, as is well known, owes its origin to the declaration that "governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed." If, therefore, South Carolina withdraws her consent from the United States Government, where is your just power to govern her? I wish I had a logical answer to that question before I advance another step in my argument. It seems indisputably evident to my mind, that all your just power or authority to govern her is nullified by such withholding of consent. Not only the American Union, but any and all other legitimate governments are destroyed by the withdrawal of the popular consent. This, according to the Declaration of Independence, is all that is necessary to effect the proper dissolution of any government.

What is the object of a government? Simply the protection of the people. But if the people do not consent to receive such protection as any power affords, what reason is there in enforcing it upon them? If political authority is exercised over a people, by taxation, direct or indirect, either by a revenue officer or a common publican, or in any other way, without their consent, it is only usurpation, and not legitimate authority. Your administration may not be tyrannical or oppressive—it may even be fatally lax and indulgent to crime; but without the consent of the governed, it is usurpation, and unwarrantable either on the principles of our own government, or any sound principles of political philosophy,—even though it be *beneficent in its aims*. But on this point let me quote again from an authority of whom an appreciative world will never tire. Milton says: "They that shall boast, as we do, to be a "free nation, and not have in *themselves* the *power* to remove or to "abolish any governor, supreme or subordinate, with the *government itself* "upon urgent causes, may please their fancy with a ridiculous and "painted freedom, fit to cozen babies, but are indeed under tyranny and "servitude, as wanting that power, which is the root and source of all "liberty, to dispose and economise in the land which God hath given "them, as masters of family, in their own house and free inheritance, "without which *natural* and essential power of a free nation, though "bearing high their heads, they can in due esteem be thought no better "than slaves and vassals born, in the tenure and occupation of another "inheriting lord, whose government, though *not illegal* or *intolerable*, hangs "over them as a lordly *scourge*, not as a *free government*, and therefore to be "*abrogated*."

Now I ask, are these words of might and grandeur the senseless ravings of a revolutionary fanatic, or the philosophical apprehensions of a

profound and world-renowned statesman? Have they not, like angelic powers, stood sentinel at the gates of Freedom, and defied the combined attacks of despotism and servility for more than two hundred years? And it is against this principle of popular supremacy, before whose imperial wand hundreds of usurping dynasties have laid down their scepters, that our infatuated government proposes to rush, in coercing a seceding State. We propose to govern a State without her consent! What is this but the re-enactment of the identical tragedy of Lord North's attempt to subdue the American Colonies? Why! even the British Government, in the more enlightened parts of her domain, has nearly or quite abandoned that principle. Why else does the premier always feel constrained to resign his office, when his measures are defeated in the popular branch of the Legislature? It is nothing less than a most significant acknowledgment of the practical triumph of popular supremacy. The very throne of free England is supposed to reflect the sentiment of the English people. How long could it endure the light of this age if it did not? So dominant is this sentiment in the English mind, that if Canada or British Columbia should to-day vote to become an independent Republic, a war to re-conquer her would doubtless seriously endanger the British throne. It is too late in the day to carry out that principle. In coercing South Carolina, or any of her seceding compeers, you would violate the most approved sentiments of modern Europe, and go back for your precedents to the grand despotisms of Louis XIV. of France, and the tyrannical usurpations of James II. of England. Even Louis Napoleon owes his imperial sceptre directly or indirectly to twenty millions of popular votes; and almost every breeze from the classic land of Italy brings to our gladdened ears the crash of some hoary dynasty, that has fallen before the imperial march of popular sovereignty.

Coerce South Carolina to submit to a foreign government, and you tear the well-earned laurels from the brow of the brave and unconquerable Garibaldi. You re-inforce the tyrannical garrisons of Rome and forge new manacles for her bleeding patriots. You pour contempt and insult upon your nation's late eloquent and distinguished guest, and give the right hand of fellowship to Austria, in her subjugation of Hungary and her other dissatisfied provinces. The doctrine of the coercion of an unwilling people, is an antiquated dogma of tyranny, and is nothing less than the old scourge of men, "*the divine right of Kings.*" I will even invoke Imperial Russia, hardly out of her childhood of civilization, to rebuke the recreancy of the American Republic to the great object of all revolutionary struggles and sacrifices—the *real political supremacy of the people.*

Let it be understood, and ever remembered, and rung through the world, to the rebuke of all tyranny, that government is a *duty* and not an *interest*. There is no *divine right of Kings*. There is a *divine duty*. Nor any more is there a *divine right of Presidents* as such. Strictly speak-

ing, government has *no rights*. It has duties to perform simply. Its whole object is to protect men in *their* rights. "Security against wrong," says Mackintosh, "is the object of all government." There is, therefore, a divine right of the people, but not of magistrates as such. Says Milton, "to say, as is usual, the king hath as good a right to his crown and dignity as any man to his inheritance, is to make the subject no better than the *king's slave*, his chattel or his possession, that may be bought and sold;" and he adds that, to affirm this doctrine, "is a kind of treason against the dignity of mankind." And surely it is equally absurd and improper for the people of one section of the country to advance a claim of right to the political allegiance of those of another section. The most arrogant pretensions of ancient royalty, are not more preposterous.

#### FREEMEN NOT SUBJECTS BUT SOVEREIGNS.

Again, the word subject itself expresses a rank political heresy, and is utterly unworthy to be applied to an American citizen.

According to the true theory of our government, and of all *free* or popular governments, the people are not subjects, but sovereigns. They are themselves the government—the supreme political tribunal. Government is *ourselves*, freely acting in a political capacity, for the *sole purpose* of protecting ourselves against lawless violence and fraud. Our object is not to *subject* ourselves to political authority, but to *protect* ourselves by our own inherent and inalienable political authority. The American people have become so degenerate under the influence of their long and aggravated violations of the principles of liberty, that they seem quite incapable of forming a conception of the true theory of government and the rights of man. But the sentiment of a true political philosophy is, "that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for man-slayers. For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men-stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine," *i. e.*, any other form of *vice*. It is a humiliating thought, unworthy of the true dignity of human nature, that an immortal man, created in the image of his Maker, should require to be subjected to the authority of some earthly potentate, to prevent his committing crime against society! I hope, therefore, that the ignoble word subject will be forever discarded from the vocabulary of those who maintain the slightest element of self-respect, or conscientious virtue. *Real* virtue will be *subject* to *no human authority*. It *nobly scorns the idea*. It is subject only to the supreme authority of right. It *acquiesces* in human authority, nay, *exercises* it against the vicious—but is *subject* only to *right*. Is it true that men pay their debts because they are obliged to by human authority? Then I rank them with whoremongers and men-stealers, whether in the church or out. Is it true that



men are deterred from murder, theft and other crimes by human governments? It simply proves them morally worthless.

#### COERCION IS USURPATION.

But let us return to the point. What right has the United States Government to impose its authority upon the unwilling people of South Carolina, or any of her Southern compeers? or rather, what right have *we*, the combined people of the other States, to govern the unwilling people of those States? Is our motive protection—the only legitimate object of government? None will pretend it. If we duly analyze the matter, we shall see that it is only the old, long-exploded, and detestable doctrine of the divine right of kings in a new form. It is true that we are not one king or sovereign, but we are a *nation* of them. We are not one usurper, but a *people* of usurpers. For it is nothing less than usurpation to exercise political authority over an unwilling people. It is the essence of usurpation—exercising authority which legitimately belongs to another. Nor does the republican form and name of the authority diminish the enormity of the crime against human nature.

#### OF THE COLLECTION OF THE REVENUE.

Suppose we simply collect the revenue of South Carolina, as the Government proposes to do, and as the people generally demand and claim the right to do, what is she any longer, I ask, but a conquered province? and what is your revenue but a forced tribute? What else did Rome, whose example we seem to be following, ever do to vanquished and humbled Carthage, or to any of her conquered provinces? What more did Alexander, or the great Napoleon, but to collect an involuntary tribute from unwilling victims of their victorious arms? I hear it every day gravely maintained and with apparent sincerity, by many of the Northern citizens, and they catch it from our members of Congress, that we do not intend to conquer South Carolina, but only to collect her revenue, and probably blockade her ports and keep possession of the military posts! But does any intelligent person fail to see that that is the full extent of political subjugation? Taxation, direct or indirect, is one of the highest functions of sovereignty, and to blockade a port, is one of the most belligerent of acts. It is truly ridiculous for grave members of Congress to disclaim any purpose of conquest or war, when they advocate the extreme measures of military hostility.

#### COERCION ITSELF THE DESTRUCTION OF THE GOVERNMENT.

When you successfully collect an involuntary and resisted revenue from the port of Charleston, or any other port within the geographical limits of South Carolina, her sovereignty is destroyed, as really as that of Carthage after the sad termination of the third Punic war.

But remember, that when South Carolina falls, she falls not alone. The suicidal hand which strikes down the sovereignty of the people of South Carolina, demolishes that of Massachusetts with it, and the whole

fabric of American Liberty falls by the same stroke. Then not one star escapes from the galaxy of free sovereignties, but all are blotted out by this sweeping stroke of despotic usurpation. We are no longer a voluntary confederation of sovereign States, but each and all of us conquered provinces of a centralized and consolidated despotism. We of the North may be voluntary in this subjection, like the more degraded of slaves—yea, we may be the unnatural agents of it; but it is subjection *still*.

Truly has it been said, that a people may lose their liberties a century before they become aware of the fact. And it is to be feared that we shall be subjugated to despotism in the very name of liberty. I am impressed with the conviction that the American people are not aware of the drift of passing and prospective events. All history is one great warning and remonstrance against our proposed course. What if it is South Carolina that is conquered now? It may be Massachusetts next. I know that slavery complains the most to-day, but liberty may be the next victim, if, indeed, it is not even now to be the *real* victim.

It seems evident to my mind that, instead of the acknowledgment of the right of secession being the destruction of the government, the practical application of the doctrine of coercion is, itself, both the destruction of the government and the efficient cause of secession.

It is the destruction of the government, because it is a political revolution. It is a change of the whole spirit of the government, from a confederacy of sovereign States, held together by mutual interest and common attachment, to a consolidated empire, bound together by military force.

It is also, to some extent, an efficient cause of the present dissolution of the Union. It is the belligerent doctrines and attitude of the dominant politicians of the North, which have precipitated this movement of secession. If the right of secession had been conceded at the first, the movement would have been deprived of its essential vigor and intensity. The people, feeling that they had a conceded right to secede at will, would naturally have delayed an act so fearfully pregnant with possible evils. They would have given themselves time to fully consider the subject in all its bearings and possible consequences. Nor could so many States have been induced to follow the momentous experiment in such hasty succession. It is very doubtful if the movement could have been effected at all, if the right to make it had not been denied. But the right was denied with threats of coercion, and the people of the slave States saw impending over them a political domination which, if its doctrines were carried out, would destroy their legitimate sovereignty, and reduce them to the condition of conquered provinces of political slaves. They were, therefore, driven to the fearful experiment of secession by the necessities of their contested and endangered rights.

## TESTIMONY OF THE FATHERS.

This very result was distinctly predicted by our political fathers, as the necessary consequence of this doctrine of force as applied to sovereign States. Mr. Madison said, "The use of force against a State would look more like a declaration of war than an infliction of punishment, and would be considered by the party attacked as a dissolution of all previous compacts by which it might be bound." Mr. Hamilton, the well known and able advocate of a strong government, asks, "How can this force be exerted on the *States* collectively? It is impossible. *It amounts to a war between the parties;*" adding also this prophetic declaration, that "*a dissolution of the Union will ensue.*"

Col. Mason said, "The most jarring elements of nature, fire and water themselves, are not more incompatible than such a mixture of civil liberty and military execution. Will the militia march from one State into another in order to collect the taxes from the delinquent members of the Republic? Will they maintain an army for this purpose? Will not the citizens of the invaded States assist one another, till they rise as one man and shake off the Union altogether?"

What delusive spell is upon our dominant politicians, that they shut their eyes to the clear light of other days, and attempt to manage the affairs of a mighty but distracted nation, with their own minds embarrassed with ignorance, and enveloped in the clouds of party passion and prejudice? Where, under the lead of such political quackery and utter selfishness, is the nation drifting?

Milton says of the political managers of his day, "how to soder, how to stop a leak, how to keep up the floating carcass of a crazy and diseased monarchy or *State*, betwixt wind and water, swimming still upon her own dead lees, *that* now is the deep design of a politician!"

It seems as if the prophetic philosopher, when he penned that description, had in his eye the very political tinkers of Washington in eighteen hundred and sixty-one.

It needs broader views, loftier aims, and holier purposes to guide the statesman amidst the storm and darkness of political and civil convulsion, when the great pillars of the government reel under the strokes of revolutionary violence, than merely to manage a political party in an ordinary contest for the spoils of office.

These are times which require not merely political cunning, but profound statesmanship. They demand the triumph and control of the great principles of permanent and unchanging truth.

## THE CASE REVERSED.

Suppose the case reversed, and, instead of South Carolina desiring to secede from the Union, for the interests of slavery, Massachusetts should wish to secede, for the interests of liberty. Suppose the people of the latter should feel conscientiously bound to withdraw political fellowship



and complicity with slavery, and to exercise their natural sovereignty in a just, humane, and impartial system of government,—would it not be oppression to coerce her to remain? Would not the combined tyranny of thirty-three coercing States be a more intolerable despotism than any single tyrant? Would it not be oppression for the general government to collect an involuntary tribute from an unwilling State, to support a government whose flag protects not only the crime of slavery but the African slave trade itself? Nor is the case at all improbable, if even Massachusetts is not wholly corrupted by the progressive degeneracy of the times. Even now the government of the United States is deemed intolerably oppressive by the best citizens of Massachusetts and many of the other Northern States. There is not a foot of soil within the wide domain of our Republic, where persecution for righteousness' sake is not the dominant principle. Fines and imprisonment follow with fearful certainty the holiest act of Christian charity. The friends of liberty and a free conscience should be careful how they sanction a principle against South Carolina, which may have equal power against the holiest instinct of humanity in the people of the Northern States.

#### IS SECESSION CONSTITUTIONAL?

I am asked if there is any provision in the Constitution of the United States, for the secession of a State from the Union? I reply, manifestly and of course *not*. No government can contemplate its own dissolution. Governments are formed for action and not cessation. We must not, therefore, look for any positive warrant for dissolution in the Constitution itself. But I trace this warrant to a far higher, holier, and more authoritative source than the Constitution of the United States. It is a right *inherent* in the divine constitution of human nature, and anterior to all human constitutions. As Senator Benjamin, in his last Senatorial effort, well and truly said, "it is an *inherent, inalienable* right." It is nothing less than the great natural right of self-government, which is only *self-protection*. I read it in that divine image—that imperial superscription, stamped upon the heart of man in his creation, by which he is born a *sovereign* and not a subject. I recognize it in the constitutional political supremacy of the people, which is fatal alike to confederated despotisms and chattel slavery.

#### THE RIGHT OF REVOLUTION.

But this, I am told, is the right of Revolution, and that is conceded. Well, if this is conceded, *all* that is essential is conceded. If the people of any territory have the natural right of revolution, it can not be the right of any power to put that revolution down. The natural rights of men can never conflict. The right of revolution, and the right of the suppression of the same, cannot co-exist. Senator Wade, in sounding the bugle-blast of that civil war which now threatens to convulse and desolate the land, *concedes* the right of revolution, and says, if successful, the revolutionists are heroes. But he maintains the co-existing right of

the general government to put them down by force, and, if successful, to constitute the revolutionists *traitors* instead of heroes; and a vast number of Northern politicians have followed his lead. But what is this sentiment but that old atheistic monster, that "*might makes right.*" The sentiment is altogether unworthy of civilization and true philosophy.

This right of revolution, which hardly any American citizen can be so inconsistent as to deny in theory, is only the natural and inherent right of self-government.

Sir Thomas Smith, an eminent British statesman, in his Commonwealth of England, says of revolution, or of rising against a tyrant, "*that the vulgar judge of it according to the event, and the learned according to the purpose of them that do it.*" *There you have it.* If you are successful, as Wade says, you are heroes like Washington; but if overpowered by numbers and crushed with brute force, you are hung as traitors like John Brown.

But this, we see, is the judgment of the *vulgar*, and not the learned. Nor is it the judgment of *history*, in the undying record of Brutus and Caesar. And your anti-slavery Senator from the "free" State of Ohio, would have the general government act out this ignoble sentiment, and put down by brute force the mother right of self-government! Great God! To what are we coming? The descendants of the heroes of seventy-six advocating and enforcing the very doctrines against which their fathers fought and bled! Did our American revolutionists do right to secede from the British Empire and set up an independent government? If so, did Great Britain do right to wage a seven years' war to violate that right and suppress that heroic struggle? Could the blood and sufferings of that memorable war result legitimately from any thing but *crime*? And which was guilty of the crime, the revolutionists, or the odious government which fought seven years to put them down?

#### THE CRY OF TREASON.

The cry of treason, that old watchword of tyrants, which is becoming so common of late in our government, and which is heard equally against freedom in Kansas, humanity in Boston, and slavery in South Carolina, is generally indicative of a declining despotism. You all remember the frequency and severity of the prosecutions for this crime, in the expiring days of the oppressive dynasty of James II. And an age which can produce a James on the throne, will generally find a Jeffries for the Bench.

When a government becomes so corrupt as to forfeit the respect and support of the citizens in whose name it is exercised, and for whose protection and benefit it professes to act, it is very apt to resent disloyalty with the charge of treason and rebellion. But a government which is obliged to resort to the punishment of treason to maintain its authority, is like a man who is always suing for his character.

The secession of South Carolina has been called in Congress "a revolt," and "rebellion." But this charge could come only from a total

misapprehension of the nature and object of free government. Revolt is resistance to the supreme authority. But the true idea of free government is, that the people themselves are this supreme authority. How, then, can a whole united people be chargeable with this crime? Can they "revolt" against themselves? The idea is absurd.

Algernon Sidney says, "The whole body of a nation can not be tied to any other obedience than is consistent with the common good, according to their *own judgment*; and having never been subdued, or brought to terms of peace with their magistrates, they can not be said to rebel against *them* to whom they owe no more than seems good to *themselves*, and who are nothing of or by themselves, more than other men."

The sovereign people are competent to any political act *whatever* that is not unjust. They are, therefore, incapable of the specific crime of "revolt." They may be chargeable with tyranny and usurpation, but of revolt, *never*. And here, again, re-appears that old dogma of semi-civilized Europe, the divine right of kings.

It was the odious Lord North who pronounced the brave Montgomery, who fell at the storming of Quebec, a *rebel*. But it was the illustrious Charles Fox who retorted in these noble words: "The term *rebel* is no certain mark of disgrace. All the great asserters of liberty, the saviors of their country, the benefactors of mankind in all ages, have been called rebels. We owe the Constitution which enables us to sit in this house to a rebellion." And I may add, that we owe the very nationality, the right of which we now repudiate and trample upon, to a *rebellion*. Such is the deranged and distracted condition of the political elements of our country at the present time, that, while the South are bravely fighting the great battle of national liberty in the name of slavery, the North are maintaining the principles of oriental despotism in the name of Liberty!

Mark! I am not now considering the motive or object of the secession of the Southern States. I am only defending the principle of self-government, or the right of any people to make, alter, or abolish their own government.

I will not say that the governing class of the slave States, by the summary repeal of all civil justice, in the enslavement of the poor, have not justly forfeited their sovereignty; but *not* to a confederacy which is equally guilty with *themselves*. I will not say that the civilized world should not unite to wipe out chattel slavery, as too inhuman to be tolerated; that they should not unitedly proscribe it, as they do the African slave trade, and inaugurate *true* popular supremacy in its place. But this is not the question between the United States and South Carolina. With us it is not a question of philanthropy, but of aggrandizement. And our motive is the identical passion that made Rome the "mistress of the world," and the tyrant of herself.



## THE INTERESTS OF THE OTHER STATES.

We are told, again, that the interests and safety of the remaining States would be endangered by the secession of one or more and the formation of another confederacy, and that the instinct of self-protection justifies the coercion of a seceding State into the confederacy. But the same argument is pleaded in favor of acquiring Mexico, and it is the identical doctrine of the famous, or rather *infamous*, Ostend manifesto, in relation to the acquisition of Cuba. And Senator Johnson, in his late speech in favor of coercion, even quotes the Ostend manifesto as authority in his favor. But it is the identical plea of the bandit or common thief. It is a re-appearance of the same old master, that "*might makes right*." It is well known, that in the canvass which resulted in the Presidency of James Buchanan, no terms of condemnation were too severe for his political opponents, against the sentiments and authors of that famous document. It is true that then it was your bull that gored my ox. But that does not make robbery justifiable. It does not repeal the principles of eternal justice.

What right, I ask, in the name of popular supremacy, has one community to subject the will of another to its own convenience and interests? No; whatever the relation of Mexico may become to England or France, by the volition of each, we have no right to invade, plunder, and subject her, to prevent it. So of Cuba, and so of South Carolina. This selfish plea of national interest and political safety, would annex to our republic every foot of territory on the face of the earth. Why not demand the control of the river St. Lawrence, as well as the Mississippi? Why allow the British flag to float triumphantly in the very heart of this North American continent?

## HAVE WE NOT PAID FOR THOSE STATES?

But it is argued that we have paid millions of money to acquire Louisiana, Texas, and Florida, and that therefore we have a pecuniary claim upon them. But if so, this claim must be either of the nature of a debt, due from a sovereign State to the general government, or else the general government must have a pecuniary proprietorship in such States. If the former, the debt must be enforced like any other pecuniary obligation between different nations. But if the latter, then those States are mere serfdoms, and not free sovereignties. And the people are not sovereigns, exercising self-government, choosing their own supreme executive; but only serfs of the soil, transferable from one potentate to another for a pecuniary consideration.

But is this so? Is Louisiana a serfdom, sold by the French, and purchased by the American empire for fifteen millions of dollars? and did the lone star republic, after bravely achieving her own independence, ignobly sell herself into everlasting serfdom to the United States, for ten millions? Are we, indeed, going back to the semi-barbarous institution of serfdom, not only for the slaves, but for masters and all?

If Louisiana and Texas, having seceded, shall refuse to pay back what has been advanced for them, I can see no redress but in the lesson it will teach us, not to make investments of such questionable propriety. Whatever the understanding of the parties was, one thing is certain, that the occupants of the soil were never authorized to sell their natural birthright of political supremacy. If they intended it, the transaction was null and void. No matter what bargain the Fathers made, they could never barter away the natural rights of an unborn and irresponsible posterity. Nor could any action of theirs absolve the acting generation from the responsibility of the faithful exercise of their natural sovereignty. This is a talent which cannot be innocently buried or sold. God and humanity will hold the people responsible, not that "the republic," so called, "shall receive no detriment," but that human *liberty* "receives no detriment."

I am asked, what if we should advance two hundred millions for the Island of Cuba, and the next day the people, on this doctrine of popular supremacy, should vote to secede? I can only reply that we had better not advance the two hundred millions. Ah! this buying States and territories is not the business of a free government. It is for the human occupants—the people of those territories *themselves* to choose or form their own government. The whole system of purchase is wrong, and of course cannot be reconciled with true political wisdom.

#### THE POSSESSION OF THE FORTS.

As to the proper possession of the military forts within the boundaries of a seceding State or territory, it seems to me that the foregoing principles apply most definitely. The whole object of those forts is to effect the legitimate purposes of government. That proposition is the key to the whole subject. The true end of government, you know, is protection. While the people of those States or territories are protected by the United States, the United States authorities occupy and garrison those forts at an expense which is defrayed by a revenue voluntarily paid by the people. Here is a fair, legitimate transaction, a *quid pro quo*. A sovereign people paying the United States, by a revenue, for protecting and guarding her national interests. But when any State ceases to require the protection of the general government and proposes to protect herself, and the United States authority ceases, for the want of the requisite consent of the people interested, there is no reason why the general government should retain possession of those forts, but every reason why they should go into the hands of the people of that territory; and for the general government to retain possession of the forts of seceding States, is to put herself in a wrong position and to provoke, protract, and aggravate a bloody struggle, in which she must ultimately yield to the great principle of popular supremacy, or the inalienable right of self-government. Her ultimate triumph is impossible. Keep ever in view the only legitimate object of government—the *protection of*

*the people*—and you cannot but recognize the absurdity of forcing protection upon an unwilling people at the point of the bayonet.

#### THE OATH OF THE PRESIDENT.

It is said that the President, having taken an oath to execute the laws of the United States, is obliged to enforce the revenue laws and other institutions of the general government upon the seceding States.

But these States, by an act of inherent sovereignty, which is above all political compacts, are out of the United States. The Constitution and laws of the general government do not apply to them. They are not now States of the Union. Secession and nullification are very different acts. Let the Northern people discriminate here. *Secession* is an act of sovereignty, to be respected; *nullification*, of rebellion, to be suppressed. The seceding States have acted with marked wisdom and propriety in preceding all their acts of so-called disloyalty by the sovereign act of secession and resumed nationality. Their position is impregnable to Federal authority.

#### THE PUBLIC PROPERTY AND PUBLIC DEBT.

It is said that the United States built and furnished the forts, dock-yards, and custom houses in the seceding States, and, therefore, they are the common property of all of the States. But, it will be remembered that, while the remaining States contributed to the public property of the seceding States, so did these in turn contribute to that of the remaining States. If it is found, in fact, that there is within the domain of the seceding States a disproportionate amount of public property, let the matter be adjusted by a rational negotiation.

In reference to this, as well as a proper division of the common public debt, and all other similar questions, the seceding States express the most becoming spirit and honorable intentions, as appears from the following article in the Constitution of the Provisional Government of the Southern Confederacy recently established. It is as follows:

“The government hereby instituted shall take immediate steps for  
“the settlement of all matters between the States forming it, and their  
“late confederates of the United States, in relation to the public prop-  
“erty and public debt at the time of their withdrawal from them,  
“these States hereby declaring it to be their wish and earnest desire to  
“adjust everything pertaining to the common property, common lia-  
“bilities, and common obligations of that Union upon principles of *right*,  
“*justice, equality, and good faith.*”

This certainly looks like the olive branch of peace; and if we decline it, and attempt the fatal policy of coercion, will not the civilized world and the impartial record of history be against us?

#### EFFECT OF SECESSION ON THE GOVERNMENT.

It is constantly said, particularly by speakers in Congress, that if our government cannot prevent a State from seceding at will, it is no govern-



ment at all. But it is forgotten, that the true glory of our government—the queen beauty of our system is, that it ceases with the will of the people. Its true strength lies not in navies and battalions, but in the affections of the people. Numbers in our midst—editors and members of Congress, are vainly boasting that we propose to show the world that we have a government that is strong enough to meet the exigency and to suppress rebellion. But they fail entirely to apprehend and appreciate the true theory of the American system. Theirs is the old European, and not the American, idea of government. Gov. Seward well remarked in his festival speech in New York, that “you cannot force fraternity.” Would that this better impulse of his heart and judgment had not been apparently disturbed in his last speech in the United States Senate!

The true strength of a free government—and they are the strongest of all, is in the devoted attachment of its citizen sovereigns. Let this be forfeited, and the government falls.

A government which is strong by the exercise of military power over its own citizens, is not a free government, but a despotism.

Instead of the peaceful separation of these States being a disgrace to our government in the eyes of the world, it will constitute in all coming time its truest glory, and will demonstrate the infinite superiority of the voluntary system of self-government over the despotic usurpations of the past.

Look at what has already been achieved in the face of prejudice and political antagonism. Where, in the history of the world, is a parallel instance of a government of 31,000,000 of people, dissolved, and that, too, from antagonist feelings, and a new confederacy of six States harmoniously formed, and still a seventh standing independent and alone, and not the first drop of blood shed, and hardly a gun fired?

This wonderful result I ascribe not to the superior intelligence, virtue, and magnanimity of the American people, but to the incomparable superiority of the true theory of our government, *viz*: the inherent and inalienable right of popular supremacy, or self-government.

#### OUR PRESENT DUTY AND POLICY.

In the present extraordinary exigency of the United States government, her true morality is her true policy. We should passively permit the slave States to secede. If it is the expressed will of the sovereign people, we should allow them to go in peace. We ought not only to be just and consistent in conceding the *right* of self-government, but magnanimous towards its exercise. It is eminently proper that the United States government should accede to the proposition of the Provisional Government of the “Confederated States of America” above referred to, in regard to negotiations concerning public property, public debts, and other international relations. And I cannot but recognize and appreciate the magnanimous and exemplary course of South Carolina in *parti-*

cular, upon this point. One of her first acts of resumed nationality was the appointment of three commissioners to the general government, to negotiate in reference to the possession of the forts, and all other matters of conflicting interest between the two powers.

But how have we answered her? Only with threats of coercion, as rebels and traitors; not with kind words of reason, but with armed vessels and frowning forts.

Senator Benjamin makes to you a most eloquent and manly appeal to allow the dissatisfied States to go in peace. And I here earnestly proclaim that, *aside from the question of slavery*, not directly involved, the request of that eloquent Senator is only the "golden rule" of conduct. It is only doing as you would be done by.

Senator Davis, in his farewell address to the United States Senate, says, "I feel I but express the desire of the people whom I represent, 'when I say, I hope, and they hope for those peaceful relations with 'you, though we must part, that may be mutually beneficial to us in 'the future.'"

I must accord to the Southern statesmen, in reference to the present issue, not only a magnanimity of spirit which their Northern antagonists seem to lack, but a far more worthy apprehension of the abstract principles of free government.

Nor can I fail to admire their superior adroitness in managing to divert the great national contest from the issue of personal liberty, where they are wrong and indefensible, to one of national independence, where they are right, and sure of the victory. And this doctrine of coercion has facilitated this change of the controversy on the part of the South, from a selfish struggle to fortify and extend the institution of negro slavery, to a righteous and dignified contest for nationality; so that, while they are contending for the identical object of the American revolution, we are only maintaining the despotic claims of British royalty.

Thus the South has ever managed to keep their Northern antagonists not only on the defensive, but constantly retreating from untenable positions.

I cannot feel for the South, in reference to this controversy, the contempt which their antagonists seem often to affect. Their course in regard to the right of self-government has been sufficiently manly and consistent. True, they have not "asked our consent" to secede; and I thank them for it: for, in so doing, they have maintained *your* natural rights and mine, as well as their own. Yea! they are bravely vindicating the rights of all nations. By asking the consent of the general government, they would have relinquished the *right* of independence.

Whatever we may think, or say, or *do*, in reference to their domestic policy, the world owes them their gratitude for fighting out the great battle of national sovereignty.

If I should be accused of being the friend of the South in regard to the present issue, and on all issues their real friend, I shall never deny the charge.

All genuine abolitionists are the true friends of the South. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." We would snatch the charming serpent from her bosom. We would take from their midst the firebrand of domestic war. We would give her internal peace, domestic security, private and public virtue, and true Christianity.

Those are *false* abolitionists, and selfish as slavery itself, who use the anti-slavery sentiment merely as their political capital; who subordinate and sacrifice the true principles of freedom to party success and personal aggrandizement. Such have no moral power over slavery, and the political power they obtain they use for themselves. There is a difference between the mere *hatred of slavery*, and the *genuine love of liberty*. The former is selfish, controversial, and revengeful; the latter, self-sacrificing, kind, and magnanimous. While the lofty and virtuous sentiment of the genuine love of liberty will never rest until the oppressed is disenthralled, the mere hatred of slavery is satisfied if the oppressor is chastised. The one springs from true philanthropy; the other from political ambition. Be assured, there is no malice or revenge in the genuine, liberty-loving, heart. Its magnanimous purpose is incompatible with such passions.

Ah! the poor, priest-ridden, government-oppressed, and self-enthralled world, never knows its true friends until after it has crucified them.

Thus I have endeavored to unfold and present the principles of political philosophy which should guide the nation in this, her most trying exigency.

#### TWO OPPOSITE COURSES SUGGEST THEMSELVES.

Two opposite courses of national policy suggest themselves in view of the present crisis.

*First*, that of physical coercion, and

*Second*, that of passive consent.

Let us examine a moment their relative propriety or impropriety.

First, look at the policy of coercion. By coercion, I mean only the enforcement of the laws of the United States upon an unwilling or seceding State. To this policy, I suppose, the incoming administration is quite fully committed. The late remarks of the President elect at Indianapolis put the matter beyond ambiguity or dispute—although he strangely denies that this is coercion!

The same policy is prompted by the first impulse of the popular mind. The Union has long been the popular idol of the country, and to touch the Union is to desecrate the household gods of the nation. The rankest despotism over soul and body, has been preferred to the dissolution of the Union. Nay! all political virtues have been sacrificed upon its altar, and even the authority of Jehovah, in the holiest mandates of



Christianity, have been trampled upon in obedience to this phantom ideal of the land.

Of course, a dissolution of the Union is popularly regarded as the most impious kind of treason. Hence the popular demand for coercion. Hence, also, the position of the popular leaders.

But let us examine this policy in the light of first principles. Is not the coercion or subjugation of an unwilling State, by the other States, a violation of the natural right of self-government? Who are the natural and legitimate rulers of a given territory—the people of *that* territory, or those of a *foreign* territory?

The advocates of coercion do not, I believe, propose more than to hold the forts, re-take those that are lost, blockade the ports, and collect the revenue of the seceding States.

But would that be effecting the legitimate object of government? Would it be protecting the people of those States? What is it to hold the forts of an unwilling people but military subjugation? What is the collection of a forced tribute but national robbery, or the legitimate spoils of conquest? And what more did Rome to conquered Carthage, and *Alaric in turn to humbled Rome*.

#### COERCION WOULD PRODUCE CIVIL WAR.

This policy of coercion must inevitably involve the whole country in a most disastrous civil war. It is the most provoking kind of a *casus belli*. It must call out and unite, in a harmonious antagonism in the seceding States, all the national resources of patriotism, pride, and self-interest. Even the whole South will probably be a unit against the policy of coercion. The necessities of her contested rights, even the mother right of self-government, require it. Submission is political suicide.

Nor will there be wanting in the North honest and effective resistance to a policy so utterly subversive of the great principles of popular liberty involved in the constitution of the American government.

Nor can the event be doubtful. The policy of coercion can never triumph. It must yield before the resistless might of great principles. It ensures to the slave States concert—courage—perseverence, and all the advantages which naturally result from a correct political position. And it must throw discord, doubt, and imbecility into the councils and measures of the general government.

In this unnatural attempt to subdue the seceding States and literally put them under tribute, your most formidable enemy will be, not a united and indignant South, in whose well known constitution pride is a stronger principle than life; but it will be the great principles of popular liberty which you challenge to mortal combat. You will war against the principle of your own immortal Revolution, viz.: the right of any people to choose their own government. All the glorious reminiscences of revolutionary valor will swarm around your armies and haunt your council chambers. You will stir the very bones of revolutionary heroes,

as your fratricidal armies march across the fields rendered sacred and classic by their death. The tombs of Kosciusko, De Kalb, and La Fayette will become vocal with execrations at your treason against the great principle of independent nationality, to which they generously devoted their lives.

Would it not be far wiser and more statesmanlike—would it not be more consistent with the dignity, and more conducive to the moral power of the government, to consistently concede to States the right of secession and self-government, and magnanimously bid them go in peace; than thus to deny that right, violate the principle of our own Revolution and suicidally attempt the subversion of the government itself, and, after all, be obliged to retreat from our position and yield reluctantly and of necessity the great right of self-government, which we had unsuccessfully attempted to overthrow?

#### ITS EFFECT ON THE CAUSE OF FREEDOM.

But suppose the combined policy of concession and coercion should be successful, and a two-fold cord should thus be formed sufficiently strong to bind the incongruous elements in one nominal confederacy; what must be the effect upon the cause of freedom North and South? On this point I am sure that many of the moderate well-wishers of the slave are deluded.

This policy of coercion, if successful, would inaugurate in the North the very despotism which would most effectively sympathise with and uphold the slavery of the South. It is to my mind the most certain of prospective events, that the spirit of freedom in the North would be subject to embarrassments never before known. The fugitive slave law would be executed by the general government with unwonted rigor. In some of the Northern States legal restraints would probably be imposed upon the tongue and the press. Already has the popular voice gone forth in several of our large cities against the free discussion of the principles of liberty. The public feeling would be alike intolerant of what it calls fanaticism, both North and South. Thus, a despotic popular conservatism would be inaugurated, more fatal to liberty than the bloody assizes of Jeffries, and more blighting to manliness than the most imperious despotism.

Such, in my apprehension, is a glance at *some* of the inevitable results of the policy of coercion.

#### THE OPPOSITE POLICY.

Look, now, a moment at the alternative policy of passive consent. What will be its legitimate effect? First, the general government will be right in principle, and consistent with her own glorious history—itsself conclusive of duty.

In the next place, the tendency of secession will be to terminate that supreme outrage upon human nature, American slavery.

Separate the slave States from the others, and slavery must stand on its own merits—now it *stands on the merits of freedom*. For nearly a cen-

tury it has been enshrined in the temple of liberty. This has been its sanctuary and security. It has escaped the ban of the civilized world solely by its political connection with the admirable system of the American confederacy.

It is, also, well known that the general government is pledged against any effective measures to bring slavery to a speedy end. In theory and practice, it is the bulwark of chattel slavery—its impregnable fortress.

Senator Johnson, of Tennessee, in his earnest speech in favor of coercion, says: "*If the abolitionists wanted to abolish slavery, the first step they would take would be to dissolve the Union.*" Clemens, of the House, says that "secession would crucify slavery." The Marlboro (N. C.) *Patriot* ably argues, that "secession would necessarily make North Carolina a free State;" and Gov. Seward, in his speech of January 12, says: "It is the Union that restrains the opposition to slavery in this country." He says it prevents the development of what he calls the European idea of opposition to slavery, viz.: that of "*simple direct abolition*—effected, if need be, by compulsion." The testimony of Gov. Hicks, of Maryland, and ex-Gov. Morehead, of Kentucky, is conclusive to the same point. Thus it is the uncontradicted testimony of our most intelligent statesmen, and those, too, the friends of the Union, that secession must effect or hasten the termination of slavery.

Where, then, does it place the coercionist? Manifestly in direct alliance with the foulest despotism on earth. Coercion, then, is not a harmless error, but a *cruel vice*. It is a two-fold crime, viz.: against national independence and personal liberty. It is not only the ally of European despotism, but the support of American slavery. The anti-slavery advocates of coercion are surely beside themselves. "They know not what they do." They are not only forging political chains for themselves, but strengthening those which have so long galled their neighbors. They profanely resist the decree of Heaven, which would divorce the unnatural and fatal alliance of slavery and freedom.

#### ITS EFFECT ON THE UNION.

In the next place, how will secession effect the American Union? I answer, exultingly, it will effect its regeneration and salvation.

It is assumed that secession is the destruction of the government. The distinguished Seward assumes it, in his speech of January 12, when he exclaims, "I feel sure that the hour has not come for this great nation to fall." He says, also, that "dissolution would not only arrest, but extinguish the greatness of our country!" O! the thralldom of mind to matter! Is it true that our national greatness consists in our physical proportions—our number of States and extent of territory? Then semi-barbarous Russia is our superior, and degraded China to be envied by us. The assumption is unworthy of a true statesman.

The true greatness of a nation consists in the perfection of her institutions, and in whatever makes her people magnanimous, prosperous,



and happy. How large was Athens, whose national glory will never fade?

If the secession of a State is the destruction of the Union, what is the addition of a State? Did the annexation of Texas make us any more a Union than before, and will her secession make us any less? Suppose the fifteen slave States *all* secede, we shall be then one-half more in number than when the Union was formed, and those, too, with the infinite superiority of being the whole nineteen free and homogeneous, instead of being twelve out of the old thirteen, slave States. This would be an immeasurable advance from 1776 to 1861.

So far from its being a shock to the cause of freedom throughout the world, it would be the unanswerable triumph of the *great American experiment*. All reproaches for our political inconsistency and national hypocrisy would be hushed, and the true spirit of liberty and democratic equality would everywhere break forth in shouts of admiration and joy. Such would be the legitimate and happy effects of the secession of the slave States upon the American Union.

Who then, I ask, is the genuine friend of the American Union? Is it the managing conservative, who bolsters up with new guaranties a monstrous system of political crime, which is the sole cause of *disunion*?

Is it those who say "a house divided against itself cannot stand," and yet continue in a confirmed condition, the sole cause of that fatal discord?

I say, on the other hand, it is those who, confiding in principle, and also viewing its natural results to be a substantial and permanent Union, have the courage and self-sacrifice to allow right principles to operate and things to find their true level.

The mass of Union savers are Union destroyers, on the principle of philosophy, that "whoso saveth his life shall lose it."

On the other hand, the true friend of the Union acts upon that sublime and heroic principle of virtue, "whoso loseth his life shall save it."

To peaceably and passively allow secession, is the only possible salvation of the American Union.

#### THE SECEDING STATES.

As to the near future of the seceding States, let us not yet lift the curtain. Let them complete, in national solitude, the fearful tragedy of negro slavery! Let us be kind, magnanimous, and pitiful to them; but uncompromisingly true to humanity. And when they shall have drank sufficiently the dregs of national woe, and been filled with their own devices; and when, under the disciplining effects of their own backslidings, they shall have put away slavery as both the curse and crime of a nation, and inaugurated true and impartial democracy, then shall we hail with unalloyed delight the "reconstruction," in a harmonious sisterhood, of these now divided States; the only reconstruction of which the nature of the case admits, and the only one which is worthy of that Almighty Providence whose hand is so visible in the momentous events of the day.











